

A PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE 70b OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CODE OF ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE
ON MISIDENTIFIED TYPE SPECIES. Z.N.(S.)2477

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There is ample evidence in the literature that in cases where it is or becomes very clear that a type species was misidentified, authors commonly do not bother to apply to the Commission but go ahead and recognize the species actually involved as type species. This maintains stability and universality, and therefore it is difficult to fault such actions even though they are in technical violation of Article 70b of the code.

2. *A Catalog of the Diptera of America North of Mexico* (1965) illustrates the immensity of the problem, at least in the field of entomology. The individual cataloguers of families listed a total of 51 genera and 3 subgenera in 25 families as having misidentified type species. Two of the generic names are junior homonyms, but both are involved in the type species of their replacement names. Twelve are synonyms in current classification. The editors allowed the cataloguers to recognize the actual species rather than the named species, if they preferred for reasons of stability, but only one chose to adopt the named species. The editors pointed out (Introduction, p. 9) that 'To conform to nomenclature requirements, application should be made to the International Commission, but time did not permit securing the necessary decisions for this catalog'.

3. For a different continent and many different authors, the *Catalogue of the Diptera of the Afrotropical Region* (R. W. Crosskey, ed.) [British Museum (Nat. Hist.), 1980] covered a fauna of similar size, 16,318 species and 2,009 genera compared to 16,130 species and 1,971 genera for America north of Mexico. The editors positively accepted the actual species involved, but misidentified, as the type species. Thus, in the 'Explanatory information on the Catalogue text' (pp. 21-22):

'If the nominal type-species was misidentified, so that the actual type-species is different from the putative type-species, the existence of misidentification and the original binomen, author and date, of the valid name of the actual species involved are shown, e.g. "Type-species: *Ocyptera pusilla* Meigen, 1824, sensu Robineau-Desvoidy [misident., = *Tachina biguttata* Meigen, 1824]", (thus the type-species is *biguttata* Meigen which Robineau-Desvoidy mistakenly identified as *pusilla* Meigen)'.

4. The Afrotropical Catalogue recorded 30 genera and 7 subgenera in 23 families as having misidentified type species. Of these one name was a homonym and 9 are currently in synonymy. Because some

old and widespread genera are involved, 15 of the problem cases occur in both catalogs, but the Afrotropical Catalogue still adds a sizeable number.

5. I believe that the Commission should be saved the work and trouble of considering clearcut cases, and taxonomists should be saved the time and effort of preparing them for the Commission and the time of waiting (sometimes) years for a decision. There must, of course, be provision for challenge, and then the case can be considered by the Commission. Meanwhile the great majority of such cases need not reach the Commission at all.

6. Accordingly, I propose that Article 70b (of 3rd edition, = 70a of 1961, 1964 editions) be amended as follows, and that a new 70c be inserted, with present 70c becoming 70d:

(b) Misidentified type species. — If, however, a person discovers that a type species was misidentified, or considers that a misidentification has clearly occurred, he or she is to continue to regard as type species the species that was actually involved, but under its correct name, and not the species represented by the name incorrectly applied to the type species.

(c) Commission action on misidentified type species. — If there is disagreement on the misidentification or on the identity of the species actually involved, the case is to be referred to the Commission with appropriate documentation and a proposal that the Commission designate as type species, by use of the plenary power when necessary, the nominal species that will best serve stability and universality of nomenclature, either

(i) the nominal species named in the fixation of the type species, regardless of its misidentification; or

(ii) the species actually involved, which was wrongly named in the type fixation, or

(iii) if the identity of the misidentified species is doubtful, a nominal species chosen in conformity with the usage of the generic or subgeneric name prevailing at the time the misidentification is discovered; or

(iv) if the Commission considers that none of these alternatives is appropriate it may designate any nominal species to be the type species.

7. Subsections (ii) to (iv) are virtually the same as in (i) to (iii) of Article 70b of the 3rd edition of the Code, and Subsections (i) to (iii) are virtually the same, in a different sequence, as (i) to (iii) of 70a of the 1961 and 1964 editions.

(8) The compact formats adopted in the two catalogs illustrate slightly different ways of representing the result, thus:

Anthrax Scopoli, 1763: 358. Type-species, *Musca morio* Linnaeus (mon.; misident.) = *Anthrax anthrax* (Schrank). [North American Catalog.]

Anthrax Scopoli, 1763: 358. Type-species: *Musca morio* Linnaeus, 1758, sensu Scopoli [misident., = *Musca anthrax* Schrank, 1781], by monotypy. [Afrotropical Catalogue].

COMMENT ON DR SABROSKY'S PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE 70

By the Secretary, International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature

Dr Sabrosky's proposed amendment to Article 70 would, if adopted, undoubtedly save the Secretariat of the Commission a great deal of work and is to be welcomed on that score. It contains within itself, however, a difficulty that he has not perceived: it would put Article 70b in direct conflict with Articles 67e and 69a(i) (of the third edition). These provisions prescribe, first, that only the actions of the original author made when a nominal genus or subgenus is established are relevant in deciding what are the species originally included in that taxon (Article 67 g further provides that a species that was not originally included cannot be the type species); and, secondly, what species can be accepted as the originally included species.

In most cases about misidentified type species, the species that is preferred for designation was not originally included; in many cases it was only established later than the genus in question; in some cases it has no name of its own at the time when the misidentification is discovered. His proposed paragraph b would be unexceptional if it were confined to cases where the species before the designator was an originally included species; but so to restrict his proposal would deprive it of nearly all its usefulness.

The solution to this conflict is not immediately apparent to me. I hope readers of the *Bulletin* will put forward proposals.